Crucks in the West Berkshire and Oxford Region

By John Fletcher

POST-WAR interest in the vernacular architecture of England and Wales has stimulated the search for cruck houses and barns and the publication of measured drawings of them. Also, there have been monographs or papers on subjects such as the technology of cruck-building in late medieval times[1] and the distribution of crucks.[2] Radiocarbon measurements[3,4] have indicated fifteenth century dates for crucks in Berkshire and their occurrence in this region has been discussed in terms of the economic conditions prevailing after the Black Death.

As a result of this activity some of the views firmly held a decade or so ago are being challenged. One, the identification of cruck-framing with the Highland Zone is belied by the numerous instances known to occur in the Midlands, Wessex and even the Home Counties. Another, that so-called base-cruck halls were derived from cruck houses is inconsistent with our present knowledge[5] of such halls and their approximate dates, these being usually *earlier* than the dates of cruck houses or barns.

Still, however, the field-work on recording examples of crucks is geographically uneven. To the earlier regional studies for Yorkshire and for Monmouthshire,[6] there have been added[7] ones by Webster for Leicestershire

[1] Charles, *Medieval Cruck-Building and Its Derivatives*, Soc. Med. Arch. Monograph No. 2, 1967.
[2] Smith, *Arch. J.*, CV (1960), 111; *Med. Arch.*, VIII (1964), 119.
[3] Fletcher, *Trans. Newbury District Field Club*, XI (1967), 5.
[4] Fletcher, University of California at Los Angeles Publication: *Proceedings of Conference on the Application of Science to Medieval Archaeology*. In course of issue.
[5] In this region such halls with curved posts at the trusses are usually of manorial or rectorial status. At Sutton Courtenay there are two: the well-known one of *c.* 1320 illustrated by Turner and Parker at the rectory house (known locally for the last century as the Abbey and confusingly miscalled the Manor House by Smith[2] and subsequently by Charles[1]): the other, William Brouns' hall of *c.* 1390 at the Manor House. In Harwell there are also two: Richard Brounz's hall of *c.* 1365 at Middle Farm and the 13th-century one at the Bishop of Winchester's Manor. In Steventon there is one of *c.* 1380 at Tudor House, and in S. Moreton, Sanderville's of *c.* 1340. Additionally the same form of truss exists in the barn (subsequently the bakehouse and in part now the Curator's house) of *c.* 1275 adjacent to the mill stream at Abingdon Abbey.
[6] Fox and Raglan, *Monmouthshire Houses*, Pt. 1, 'Medieval Houses'. Cardiff, 1951. Charles, op. cit., 16, gives earlier references.
[7] Webster, *Trans. Leics. Arch. Soc.*, XXX (1964), 26.
Marston, *Derbyshire Arch. J.*, LXXXVII (1967), 117.
Totals of crucks are:
Monmouthshire, 31.
Leicestershire, 55 in 1954: now increased to over 80.
Derbyshire, about 80.

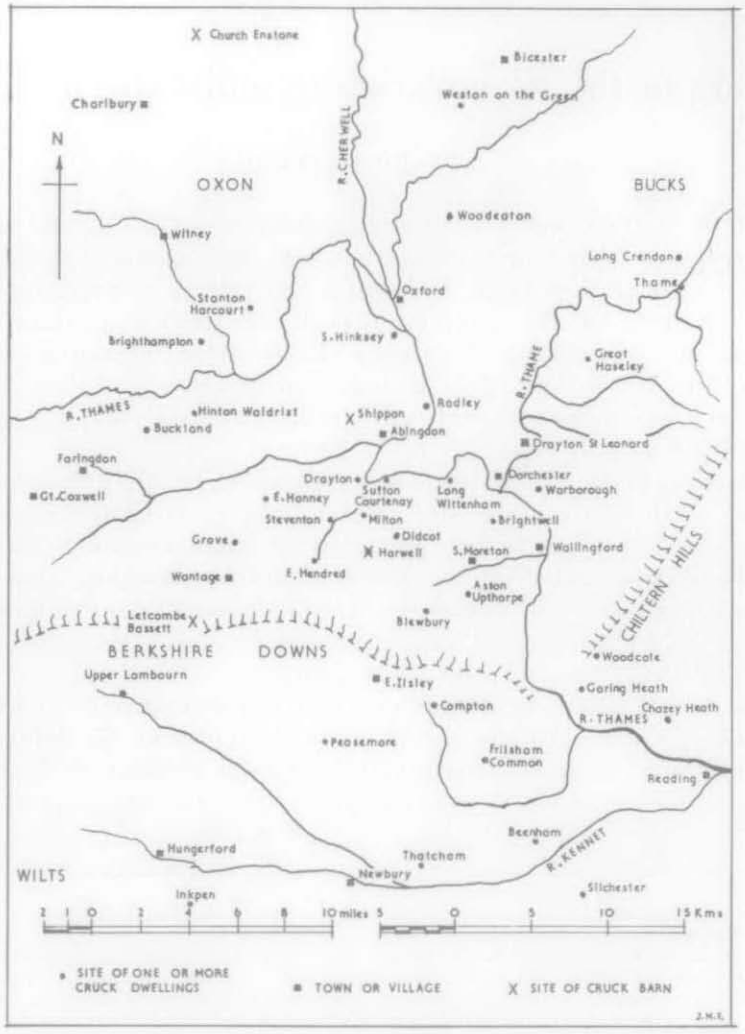


FIG. 20
W. Berks and Oxford Region.

and by Marston for Derbyshire. The summary here presented for the W. Berks. and Oxford region (FIG. 20) is an interim measure, in succession to the paper by Portman,[8] to enable these examples to be assessed and to encourage the existence of others to be made known.

[8] Portman, *Berks. Arch. J.*, LVI (1958), 35.

CRUCKS IN THE WEST BERKSHIRE AND OXFORD REGION

The buildings included in this summary meet the criterion of Charles[1] of being framed buildings and having a truss with cruck blades, i.e. curved timbers which (i) rise from a plinth (in a timber-framed building), or from within a wall (in a stone building); and (ii) virtually reach the apex of the roof. Prototypes or derived forms having a curved member and variously called base-crucks, upper-crucks, jointed-crucks, raised-crucks, are excluded.

The region chosen is within a radius of 20 miles from the two villages of Harwell and East Hendred in which there are many cruck houses. These adjacent villages are some 5 miles south of Abingdon and 11 miles south of Oxford. In Wiltshire, that is to the south-west and west of the region, there are the crucks of the Vale of Pewsey and those at Bradford-on-Avon, Lacock and Chippenham; while in the upper Thames valley in the same county there was formerly a cruck barn at Cricklade.[9] To the north-west and west, crucks are largely absent in the oolite belt of N. Oxfordshire, but occur again beyond Banbury[10] on the borders of Northamptonshire. East of Long Crendon and Thame, some examples are known in other parts of Bucks. and in W. Herts.[11]

Cruck buildings are relatively difficult to date. Hewett[12] has pointed out that the evolution of the form of joints is significant in medieval timber-framing. Scarf joints occur on longitudinal members such as the purlins and the aisle (or rafter) plates in cruck barns and can often be seen at floor level: similarly, the wall plates in cruck houses often have scarf joints. The main types of scarf joints (there are variants to each) found in this region, in other parts of Wessex and also in Essex[12] from the 13th century to *c.* 1550 are illustrated in FIG. 21A and here referred to as Types 1, 2, 3. The range of dates is indicated by the following examples:

Type	*Name*	*Examples*	*Date*
1	Through-splayed, horizontal	Gt. Coxwell, Barn	Mid to late 13th
		Bradford-on-Avon, Barn	Early 14th
		Harwell, Wellshead Farm, N. Range	Early 14th
2	*Trait de Jupiter.* Splayed-and-tabled, Fig. 24 of note 12(b)	Old Deanery, Salisbury.	*c.* 1260
		Cressing Temple, Wheat Barn	*c.* 1250
		Abingdon Abbey, Barn	*c.* 1275
		Bisham Abbey, Montagu's Great Chamber	Mid 14th

[9] Nicholson, *Cricklade Historical Society Bulletin*, II (1965), 4.

[10] Wood-Jones, *Traditional Domestic Architecture in the Banbury Region*, Manchester Univ. Press, 1963.

[11] For Long Crendon, Beresford, *Records of Bucks*, XVIII (1967), 125. Beresford mentions the existence of nine cruck houses lying to the east of Long Crendon and in Bucks. The one at Chalfont St. Giles, Stell, *Records of Bucks*, XVIII (1966), 73, is quite close to London. Bailey and Hutton, *Crown Post Roofs in Hertfordshire*, 1966, mention three in W. Herts.

[12] Hewett, (a) *Arch. J.*, CXIX (1962), 225; (b) *J. Soc. Architectural Historians*, XXVI (1967), 48.

3	Edge halved and doubly bridled, Fig. 15 of note 12(b)	Lyford Grange, Berks	*c.* 1480
		Winchester, Pilgrim's School, Classrooms	*c.* 1560

The limit for crucks tentatively suggested by Innocent as the line from the Bristol Channel to the Wash, was shown in the distribution map produced by Smith[2] to be too restrictive: it now seems to run approximately from Christchurch (Hants) through Winchester and Windsor to St. Albans before turning more northwards to the Wash. Along and to the south-east of this limit, the comparable house built in the same period (approx. A.D. 1400-1550) as the cruck house was either the Wealden or a range with a trussed rafter roof employing crown posts and a collar purlin. The band of territory to the south-east of which crown-post roofs persisted[13] after *c.* A.D. 1400, does in fact roughly correspond to the south-eastern limit of the cruck house.

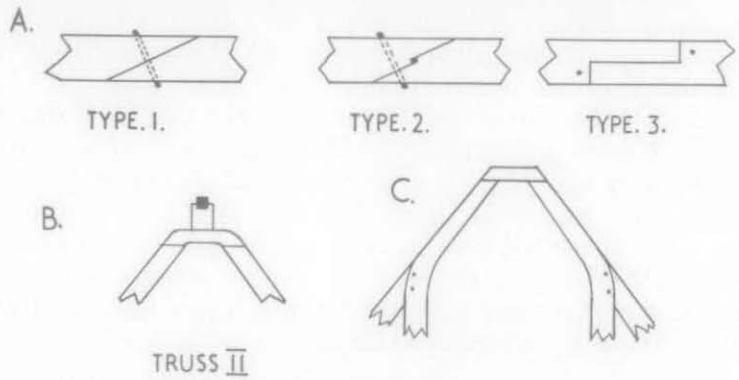


FIG. 21
A. Elevations of Scarf Joints on Purlins or Plates.
B. Yoke on Truss in Cruck Barn, Middle Farm, Harwell.
C. Cruck Truss at Stockwell Cottage, Aston Upthorpe.

CHRONOLOGICAL SEQUENCE:

In this region and the adjacent parts of Wessex and the Cotswolds, the rise to maturity and the subsequent decline in the building of framed cruck barns and houses fits quite simply into the overall pattern of buildings between the end of the Romanesque period and late Tudor times. That it has taken some time to appreciate this relationship may be due to a number of factors. One, of course, has been doubts about dates. Others seem to stem from the

[13] Fletcher and Spokes, *Med. Arch.*, VIII (1964), 152. The limits for the persistence in the 15th century of crown-post roofs, shown in Fig. 50, were those proposed by Rigold in *Culture and Environment*, London, (1963). In the light of further finds, it now seems that the area of persistence should include the whole of E. Anglia, Cambs. and parts of Herts.

introduction of many hyphened 'cruck' words and from undue attention being given to the tracing of links with the far distant past. Both appear to have diverted attention from the simplicity of the relationship.

The story of framed crucks begins in the 13th century with the innovations and technological advances in timber-framing and roof construction[13] that were occurring in France, Flanders and England in the post-Romanesque phase of architecture. There were highly skilled master carpenters[1] directing the new forms of roof construction in the Gothic cathedrals, abbeys, and royal palaces being erected. The extravagant use of timber employed in the Romanesque roofs had to be reduced. This need, together with some new requirements posed by design, motivated the innovations.

Thus we find by the middle of the 13th century that the straight timbers that characterized Romanesque work were no longer always being employed. There are a few short, curved members in the original work over the north aisle of Salisbury Cathedral that can scarcely have been placed in position later than 1240.

Slightly later (1250–80) curved members begin to play important roles in timber-framing over a wide area. One such function was in helping to span relatively wide roofs (up to 40 feet in width) with slender curved members to form the 'wagon-shaped' arch. There are early examples of this in Central France (the lay brothers' dormitory at Abbaye de Noirlac, Cher, 1240–60); in Flanders (Bruges, St. Jacob Church); and in Germany.[14] Another function was achieved by the use of curved posts as principal trusses where they integrated the vertical face of the stone walls of a building with the slope of the lower part of the roof. Such posts were used in St. John's Hospital at Bruges; at the Old Deanery, Salisbury; and in the monastic barns at Great Coxwell, at Littleton and at Abingdon Abbey itself.[15,5] By about 1300, this type of curved post (the base-cruck of current parlance) had become widespread in Wessex and the Midlands for the central truss in manorial halls.

It was only a step further to use the same length of curved post in a narrower building, or a longer length in the same width of hall or barn. Both produce the cruck blade. We are unlikely to know just where, when or by whom, this step was first taken. It is likely to have been soon after A.D. 1300, and it may well have been in Wessex or the lower Severn region; the early 14th

[14] There is a section of the Abbaye de Noirlac dormitory in Fig. 53 of *op. cit* in note 13. S. Dipl. Ing. Reinhard Reuter of Darmstadt has made a study of this form of roofing in Germany and other countries.

[15] N. Drinkwater, *Antiq. J.*, XLIV (1964), 41: Horn and Born, *The Barns of the Abbey of Beaulieu at its Granges of Great Coxwell and Beaulieu St. Leonard*, University of California Press, 1965: Horn and Charles, *J. Soc. Architectural Historians*, XXV (1966), 221.

century barn[16] of Shaftesbury Abbey at Bradford-on-Avon has cruck blades. We can be fairly certain that the innovation came from one of the master carpenters normally employed by important households or ecclesiastical foundations.

Curved blades took the usual course down the social scale. By the third quarter of the 14th century, Richard Brounz, when improving his manor house[17] at Harwell, used them first below the embattled collar of his hall; secondly, in the 3-bay cruck unit he attached to the house; and thirdly in his six-bay cruck barn.

By about A.D. 1400 we find moulded cruck trusses being used at the new rectory house at Hinton Waldrist, and the dates given later in this paper imply that it was around A.D. 1400 that cruck houses were built by the prosperous peasants emerging from the aftermath of the Black Death. In the 15th century, as far as this region is concerned, the cruck house was at its peak.

By the 16th century, cruck houses were in decline, replaced by the next form of timber-framed house, that with morticed post-and-truss construction. This in turn had passed down the social scale. After the middle of the 15th century, this construction became common in the local manor houses (Ockwells, Hendred House, Lyford Grange) and was being adopted by the yeoman, woolman and clothier early in the 16th century.

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES:

The regional differences in the distribution of framed crucks, that is their absence in S.E. England and in most areas of the Continent, may perhaps be helpfully considered in relation to the two species of oak common in N.W. Europe. These, the sessile and pedunculate, differ somewhat in their manner of growth and their tolerance of soils.

The sessile has the greater vigour, resistance to exposure and tolerance to soil extremes, i.e. both to the light sandy and to the heavy clay soils. It is now the species of many high forests, particularly on the Continent, the Spessart Forest in Germany being a well-known example. It was eminently suitable for providing the long, rather narrow, rafters etc. employed in Romanesque roofs.[13] Until relatively recent times it was an important constituent of the oakwoods in many parts of England, one example being the northern high-lying part of the New Forest.[17a]

The pedunculate is also now a component of many oakwoods in England, particularly where the soil is a medium heavy loam. It produces the higher yield of acorns and is the more prone to form side branches of substantial size.[17b]

[16] There is scroll moulding. Ministry of Public Buildings and Works leaflet, reprint of 1962.
[17] Fletcher, *Berks. Arch. J.*, LXII (1965-6), 45.

This variety was therefore encouraged, at least as early as 1570,[17a] in certain shipbuilding areas of England,[17c] by being planted in relatively good, cleared ground. Of the two species, it was the more suitable to provide curved cruck blades. Hedgerow or parkland specimens, with broad crowns and low side branches, would have been adequate for a cruck house some 20 feet high.

The absence or scarcity of medieval crucks in a particular region of N.W. Europe may therefore reflect the rarity, for one of two or three reasons, of pedunculate oak in that region.

CRUCK BARNS

The four cruck barns known to me are as follows:

				Bays		
		Walls	*Covering*	*No.*	*Length*	*Breadth*
Church Enstone, Oxon.	Rectory Barn SP/378250	Stone	Slate	6	12 ft.	27 ft.
Harwell, Berks.	Middle Farm SU/492893	Timber	Slate?	6	13½	28
Letcombe Bassett, Berks.	Rectory Barn SU/375850	Timber	Thatch	4	13½	22
Shippon, Berks.	Calcott's Place SU/485980	Stone	Slate	5	*c.*11	23½

The Rectory Barn at Church Enstone[18] is only on the fringe of the region, and can be regarded as being related to the medieval stone barns in North Oxfordshire[10] and in parts of Gloucestershire and Worcestershire. This barn has no windbraces and as Wood-Jones[18] says 'it lacks the detail and craftmanship of many of the great barns of the 14th century . . . and appears to belong to the tradition of vernacular building, despite its monastic foundation'. It includes a date stone which records that it was built in 1382 for the Abbot of Winchcombe. Its vernacular nature is brought out by comparison with the almost contemporary cruck barn at Middle Farm, Harwell. The latter formed part of an extensive farmstead (FIG. 22A) built by one of the new men of the post-plague years of 1349 and 1361. The sophistication of the Harwell barn appears in the dimensions of its cruck blades (PLATE VIII) and in the absence of halved joints (these were used between the collars and blades at Enstone).

[17a] Anderson, *Forestry*, XXIV (1951), 79.

[17b] Stands of both species, planted at the same time, may be compared in compartment 16 at Bagley Wood, Berks (SP 513021) or in the Parkhill Inclosure of the New Forest (ref. 17*a*).

[17c] Being the species suitable for ships, pedunculate oak probably acquired the term 'ships' timber', a phrase handed down and now commonly used by the occupants of certain cruck houses. They, however, amend it to 'ships' timbers' and believe, incorrectly, that the timber came from former ships.

[18] Wood-Jones, *Oxoniensia*, XXI (1956), 43.

As surviving barns of date earlier than the 16th century are rare in the region, it is of interest to consider why the others known are *not* of cruck construction. Two, the Great Coxwell barn[15] and the small barn at Abingdon Abbey already mentioned, were both built a quarter of a century or so before A.D. 1300. They have curved members but not cruck blades. In another stone-walled barn (probably of 13th century date) built by Abingdon Abbey, namely that lying a mile or so to the north of the Abbey at Northcourt, the form of the original framing is difficult to determine as the barn was modified and re-roofed in the 17th century.

There are also some later medieval barns without cruck framing. One, the barn of the Warden of New College, Oxford, built about 1402, follows the Winchester (and S.E. England) form of framing that prevailed at the time. Instead of side purlins it has a collar purlin roof with crown-posts, similar to that (illustrated in PLATE XIV of note 12(b)) in the College's *necessarium*. Another was Reading Abbey's barn at Cholsey. For this[19] we have to rely on the drawings made just before its demolition in 1815. They show an exceptionally large span, 54 feet, which is far too wide for cruck construction and was achieved by a nave plus aisles with piers of masonry.

Harwell, Middle Farm (Brounz's Manor): A fine cruck barn lies at the corner of the homestead (FIG. 22 and PLATE VIII). It has already been suggested[17] that Richard Brounz, Sheriff of Berks. and Oxon 1381–2, built the hall, north wing range and cruck outhouse at this manor about the year 1365: the cruck barn appears to be contemporary.

A 2–3 foot high plinth shows the extent of the original six-bay barn. The five eastern trusses and the associated four eastern bays have survived almost unchanged.

The eastern end is half-hipped and on the north side of the roof there are still some Stonesfield slates—perhaps the original form of covering. Large stylobates exist on the north side at Trusses I, II and V.

As in the barn at Bradford-on-Avon, the upper part of the roof structure varies from truss to truss. Clearly some difficulty was experienced in obtaining blades long enough to reach from plinth to yoke, since they only reach the upper collar in Truss III. The yokes also vary: the type which occurs in Truss III (seen in FIG. 22) was also used at Truss IIII; but at Truss II there is a short post, doubly jowled (FIG. 22). Similar jowls were used on the heads of the crown posts in the hall and N. range of the house itself.

The scarf joints on the purlins are a modified form of Type 1 since the diagonal lines of the through splays appear not on the faces of the purlins,

[19] Horn, *J. Soc. Architectural Historians*, XXII (1963), 13.

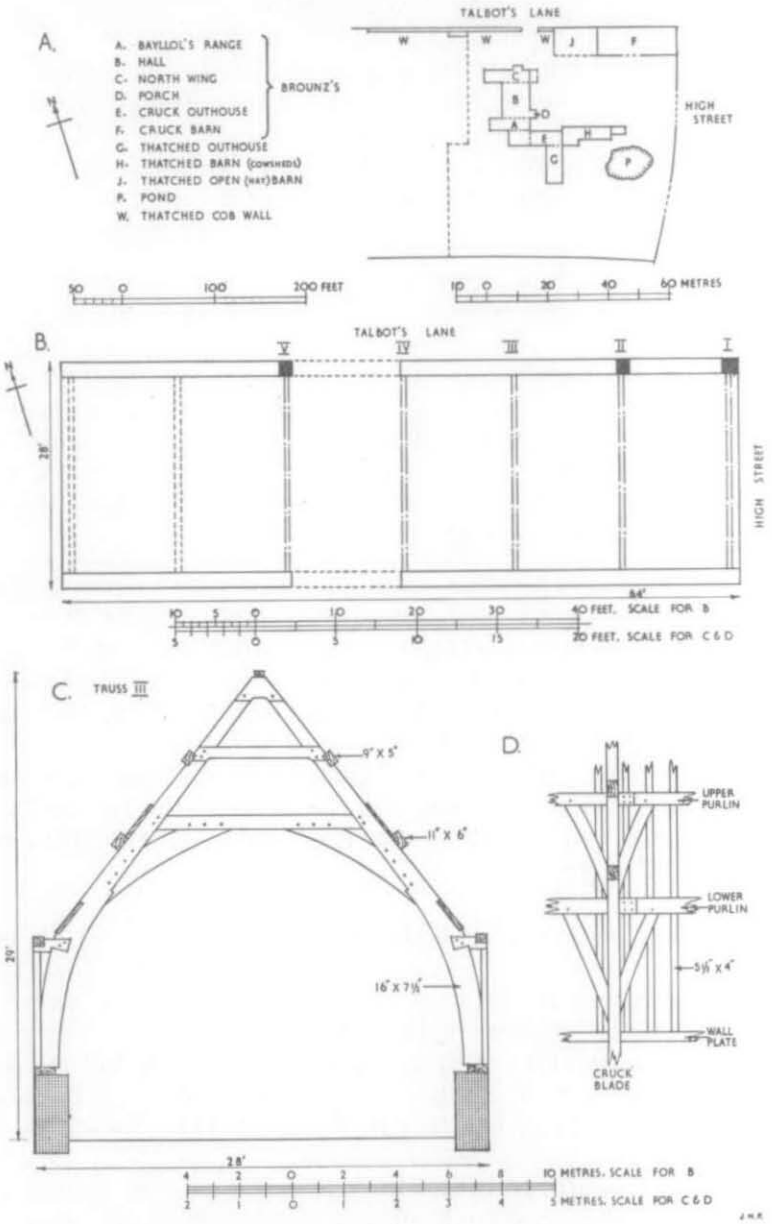


FIG. 22
Middle Farm (Brounz's Manor), Harwell.
A. Homestead, based on Tithe Award Map, 1840.
B, C. D. Cruck Barn: Plan, Section, Roof Framing.

but on their soffits. A few assembly marks have been found. These are on the west side of the beams and include marks other than Roman numerals. The mark III occurs on the spur-tie of the Truss called III.

The cruck *outhouse*—now called The Cherry Barn—at Middle Farm is included in List A, since it was not built as a barn but was part of the complex of the manorial house.

Letcombe Bassett, Rectory Barn: This lies east of the church. The barn is half-hipped at its west-end and consists of four cruck bays to the west and later bays to the east.

The collars are morticed to the blades and are supported by multi-pegged arch braces (there are no halved joints). The original purlins (that is the middle set of three) rest in trenches on the blades and have through-splayed scarf joints (Type 1, FIG. 21A). The yokes are solid and the wind-braces do not meet. A date in the first half of the 14th century is likely on the evidence provided by the framing.

Shippon, Calcott's Place: The stone barn (FIG. 23, kindly prepared and drawn by Mrs. Katherine Adams) with cruck roof trusses is part of the ancient farmstead, known as Calcott's Place, which formed part of the manor of Shippon. In recent years this farmstead has been called the Manor House. The manor of Shippon belonged to Abingdon Abbey and, like Abingdon itself, was administered by the Kitchener who, by the 15th century, was leasing Calcott's Place. The barn was probably built in the 15th century as the purlins, though lying in trenches on the backs of the blades, have scarf joints of Type 3. There have, however, been replacements both to the ridge beam and to parts of the purlins.

CRUCK DWELLINGS

RECORDS:

Of the 63 dwellings in List A, descriptions with measured drawings have already been published of four in Long Wittenham[8]; of Dell Cottage[20] and the outhouse[19] (PLATE VIII) at Middle Farm, Harwell; and of the houses at Upper Lambourn[20] and at Radley.[21] Accounts of the ten discovered by Mr. Guy Beresford in Long Crendon in *Records of Bucks.* have been recently published.[11]

Notes below amplify the details in the List for another 23 which I have examined. Many of the remainder have a cruck truss visible externally and

[20] Fletcher, (a) *Oxoniensia*, XXVI/XXVII (1961/2), 207; (b) *Trans. Newbury District Field Club*, XI (1967), 5.
[21] Hinton, *Oxoniensia*, XXXII (1967), 13.

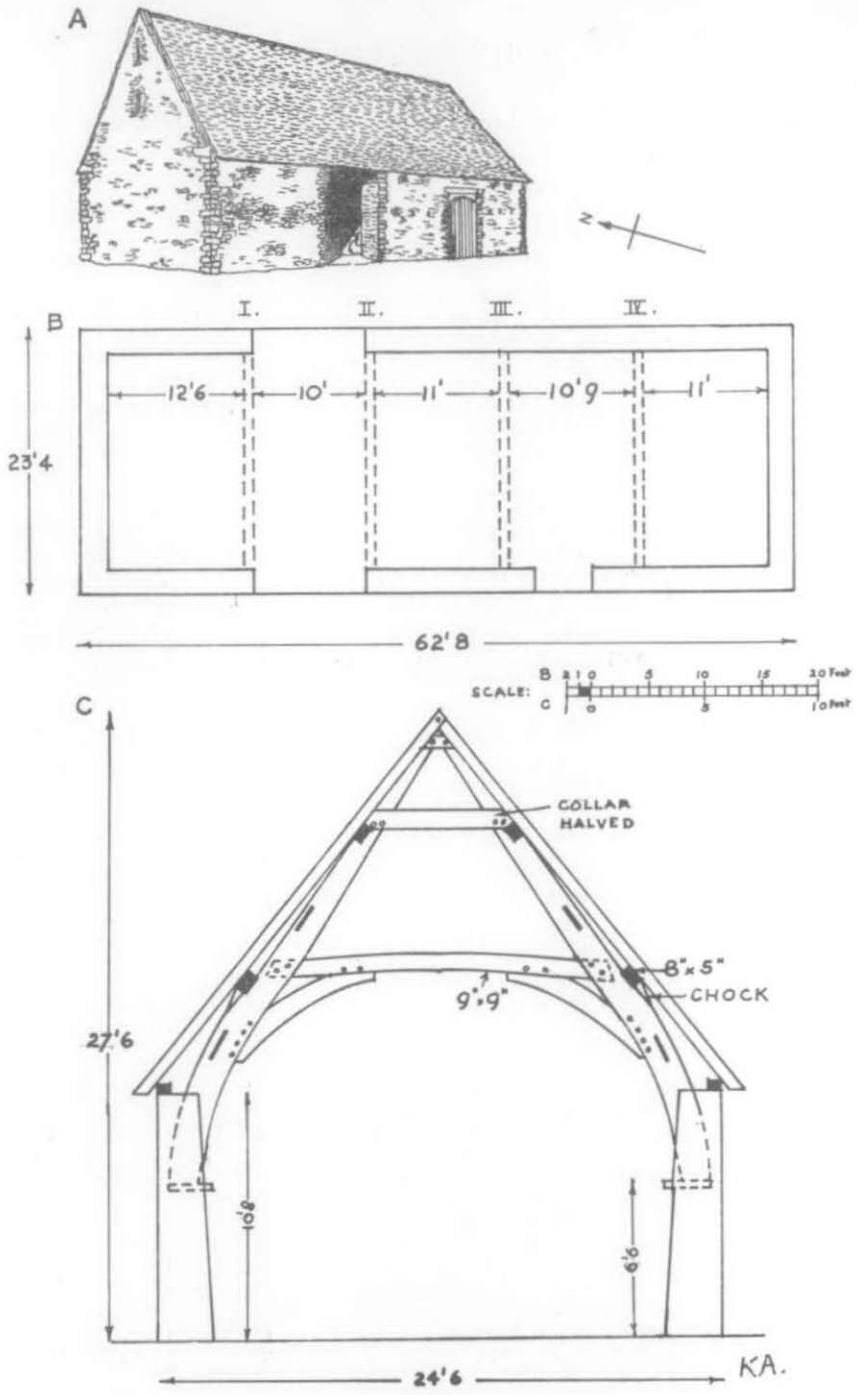


FIG. 23
Shippon Barn. A. Perspective from West.
B, C. Plan and Elevation of Truss III.

this has often been photographed or sketched by the persons who kindly notified me of their existence.

LIST A: CRUCK DWELLINGS

Parish (a)	*Nat. grid ref. (b)*	*Name or Location*	*Trusses Existing*	*Bays*		
				No.	*Lengths ft.*	*Breadth ft.*
Aston Upthorpe	554864	Stockwell Cottage	1	IE		
Beenham	597695	White Cottage	3	3?	16	18
Blewbury	534861	South Street	1+			
	530856	Watery Lane, Stocks	1*+			
Brighthampton, Oxon	SP385036	The Old Cottage	4+2*†	3+1	13, 14	18
Brightwell	578910	The Cottage				
Buckland	344979	Arnhem Cottage	1	IE	12, 13	17
Chazey Heath	6977		1*+			
Compton	530797	Wallingford Road	2	IE		
Didcot	521904	26 Manor Road	1+	IE		
Drayton	482941	69 High Street	4*†	3+1	13, 11	16
East Hanney	419930	The Green	1*	IE	1E	16
East Hendred	458886	Church St., Wythe Cottage	4	4	14, 11, 9	17
	458885	— — Old Forge	3	IE	13	15
	458884	Horn Lane	3	3?	12, 15	17
	460885	2 Newbury Road	3+	4?	11, 15	18
	458888	Catte Street, Briar Cottage	2	IE		
	461885	2 St. Mary's Road	1*+			
Frilsham Common (Bucklebury Parish)	555732	Magpie Farm	4	3	17, 12	18
Goring Heath, Oxon	65 80		1*+			
Great Haseley, Oxon	SP642018	Crucks	3	IE	13, 17	15
Grove	40 90	Orchard View	1*+			
Harwell	492894	Middle Farm Outhouse	2	3		17
	493891	Church Lane — Dell Cottage	2*	3	13	17
	,,	,, — Le Carillon	2*	4?	?, 12	20
	,,	,, — Lockton Farm	2*	3?	14, 10	18
	492888	Wellshead Lane — Holywell Cottage	3*	3		16
	,,	Lane — H. S. Baker's	1	IE	12	21
	494893	Jennings Lane, School House	2*	IE	10	16
	494897	Townsend, Pomander Cottage	2*	3 or 4		
	493895	High St., Drewett's Shop	(d)			
Hinton Waldrist	376992	The Rectory	2	3+		
Inkpen	360642	The Mead	2	IE	12	16
Long Crendon, Bucks.	SP687093	Lower End — Northend Farm	(d)	3		17
	686091	End — Dragon Farm				16
	687092	Green — Lower House				16
	689090	Bicester Road — Old Bakehouse				17
	693087	Road — Sycamore Farm	(d)			17
	,,	— No. 7				13
	693086	The Manor, Garage				16
	696087	High Street, No. 29				15
	699090	Church Green† — Cottage A				15
		,, B				13
Long Wittenham	548939	Church Farm — House	1	IE		
	,,	— Tractor Shed	2*	2 or 3		18
	545937	Cruckfield Cottage	2	2+	10	18
	548938	No. 33 High St.	1*+	IE	12	15
	548953	Barley Mow	3*	3 or 4	14, 16	18
Milton (Berks)	481926	The Mill	1	IE		

Parish	*Nat. grid ref.*	*Name or Location*	*Trusses Existing*	*Bays*		
				No.	*Lengths ft.*	*Breadth ft.*
Peasemore	459771	The Cottage	1	IE		17
Radley	532990	Lower Radley	4+1 (d)	3+1	12—16	16
Silchester, Hants	644626					
South Hinksey	SP509041		(d)			
Stanton Harcourt, Oxon	SP413058	Smith Cottage	2	3	13? 13, 14?	18
Steventon	467917	83 The Causeway	4	3	13, 15	17
	470918	39 The Causeway	1	3	13	17
Thame, Bucks.	SP703062	High St.				
Thatcham	520675	London Road	(d)			
Upper Lambourn	316803	Crutch House	5	4	12, 10	19
Warborough, Oxon	598395					
Weston-on-the Green Oxon	SP182536	Knowle Lane, The Cottage		IE		
Woodcote, Oxon	65 82	Exlade St., Carter's Cottage				
Woodeaton, Oxon	SP535120	The Green	1(d)	4?		17

(*a*) County is Berks unless marked otherwise.
(*b*) All grid squares are SU except those prefaced.
(*c*) Bay Lengths are centre to centre: breadths are external. IE stands for insufficient evidence.
(*d*) Has been demolished since 1950.
* Cruck truss visible externally.
† House has a second range with cruck framing lying at right angles.

Note added at Proof Stage (September 1969):
Mr. E. R. Manley, Hon. Secretary of The Hendreds Society, has found in East Hendred several more cruck houses, two being in Catte Street. There is also one truss (in the north gable) of Ramsey's Farm, High Street, Sutton Courtenay.

TYPE OF HOUSE (FIG. 24):

While most of the cruck dwellings listed are likely to be the 3-bay type built in a village for the peasant who became prosperous in the 15th century, three other categories are apparent. First, there are the dwellings of superior status, exemplified both by the rectory house at Hinton Waldrist and also by

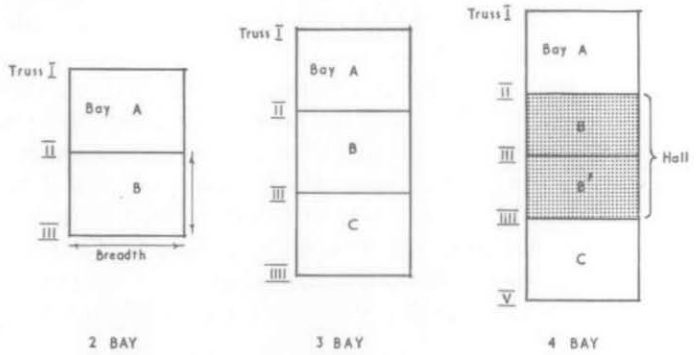


FIG. 24
Outline Plan of 2, 3 and 4 Bay Cruck Houses.

Northend Farm, Long Crendon (the open trusses in the halls have soffits moulded to a similar profile).[11] Secondly, there are the isolated dwellings in semi-wooded areas such as the crucks at Beenham, Frilsham Common and in the Chilterns. These, as in the Weald, may represent new (or at least much improved) settlements built from *c.* 1450 to 1550 away from nucleated villages. And thirdly, there are late (mid-16th century) 4-bay units, such as those at Uplambourn and at Wythe Cottage, East Hendred, in which the truss dividing the hall is of post and truss, not cruck, construction.

DATES:

Samples taken from some of the cruck dwellings in North Berkshire have been sent for radiocarbon measurements to Prof. W. F. Libby's laboratory at the University of California at Los Angeles. Corrections, amounting to no more than 20 years for each, can be readily applied to the radiocarbon ages reported[22] (i) to bring them into line with the now accepted half-life (5,730 years) of carbon 14, and (ii) to allow for isotopic fractionation (obtained for the second series by measuring the C13/C12 ratios).

Unless, however, corrections are also made

(i) for the fluctuations that have occurred in the carbon 14 content of the atmosphere; and

(ii) for the years of growth between the wood analysed and the years of felling,

the construction dates derived may well have as tandard deviation (σ) of more than a hundred years.

With these North Berkshire samples, care was taken to send heart-wood for which the growth allowance could be assessed to within about 10 years.[22a] And the radiocarbon ages can now, thanks to work published in *Radiocarbon* for 1966, be corrected for the carbon 14 fluctuations. (The magnitude of these corrections are included below.)

Consequently, the standard deviations (which provide limits within which there is a 68 per cent chance of the actual date lying) are relatively low for these results. It will be noticed that the corrections give good agreement for the two cruck trusses sampled at Steventon, while the date derived for the cruck outhouse at Middle Farm, Harwell, agrees well with that (*c.* 1365) already mentioned[17] as being likely on historical grounds. Even so, the actual building date of one or two of the cruck dwellings in the list below may be 50 years or so different from that deduced from the radiocarbon measurements.

[22] *Radiocarbon*, v (1963), 19.
[22a] Fletcher, *Antiquity*, XLII (1968), 230.

First Series[4] (Sampled 1962)	*Radio-carbon Age (Years B.P.)*	*Age Corrections*		*Date of Use*
		C14 Fluctu-ations (Years)	*Growth (Years)*	
Long Wittenham:				
Church Farm, House	560±60	−5	−50	A.D. 1445±70
Church Farm, Tractor Shed	425±35†	+65	−20	1480±40
Harwell:				
Dell Cottage	545±45†	0	−20	1425±50
Le Carillon	565±60	−5	−40	1430±60
School House	410±60	+75	−60	1525±40
*Second Series** (Sampled 1967–68)				
Harwell:				
Wellshead, H. S. Baker	780±50	−45	−50	1265±40
Middle Farm, Cruck Outhouse	630±50	+10	−40	1350±50
Lockton Farm, Cruck Outhouse	655±50	0	−30	1325±50
Steventon:				
83 The Causeway	805±50	−70	−55	1270±40
83 The Causeway	888±50	−43	−75	1280±40

* As these results were only received in June 1969 and have been included at the page proof stage, no account is taken in the discussions on pages 75–76 of the likelihood that two of these three cruck buildings are earlier than A.D. 1300.

† Averages for more than one sample.

Aston Upthorpe, Stockwell Cottage: Central position in village adjacent to ' The Boot '. Cruck truss older than fire-place, made from chalk blocks, and associated ceiling beams (scroll stops) inserted *c.* 1600. In this case, the blades do not reach the yoke but end at curved members with the form shown at FIG. 21C.

Beenham, White Cottage: Remote from village and part of a messuage (? yeoman's) of late 16th century date. There are two bays, now floored and used as a garage on ground floor, formed from three cruck trusses. The purlins are carried on extended collars (as at Uplambourn[20]) and their scarf joints are the late, bridled Type 3 (FIG. 21A). Windbraces, smoke-blackened beams and assembly marks are absent.

Brighthampton (Oxon.): 3 bay, thatched cruck range, parallel to road, with smoke blackened collar over central truss of hall. Non-axial fireplace and first floor inserted *c.* A.D. 1600. Separated from this 3 bay range by another bay, 10 feet long and not quite in line, is a second 18 feet broad cruck-framed range with gable to road.

Buckland, Arnhem Cottage: There is a cruck truss inside a stone-built cottage of overall length *c.* 45 ft. This may have been the full extent of a 3-bay unit, with the existing truss, the open one (truss II), in a 2-bay hall.

Drayton (Berks.), 69 High Street: Opposite Drayton Manor. Typical 4 bay type with flanking bays A and C (13 ft. long) differing in length from those of the central 2 bay hall (22 ft. total). Truss II, second from east, has medieval assembly mark. Bay C, has joists *square* in section resting on tie-beam and probably original. There is an additional cruck truss (perhaps of later date) in the gable of a bay which makes L shape with Bay C.

East Hendred:

(*a*) Wythe Cottage, Church Street: Interesting as a late, perhaps *c.* A.D. 1600, example for this region. There is the usual plinth and blades from divided balks—but the timber is narrow and often unsquared on one side. There are no windbraces and the purlins occur higher than usual on the blades. The ridge piece is placed diagonally. The ground-floor hall (there is smoke blackening) probably like Uplambourn and a box-frame truss in the middle of its 19 feet length. There are post-medieval assembly marks on truss III, yet the collar of the end truss (I) is halved to the blades. One end bay certainly, and both probably, were floored originally.

(*b*) Old Forge, Church Street: Perhaps, originally, a small and early 2-bay unit.

(*c*) The Cottage, Horn Lane: A sturdy range with Bay A probably not floored originally. An axial fire-place, with associated bridging beams having scroll stops, has been inserted in the long second bay. Saw marks are very prominent on some of the blades and windbraces.

(*d*) 2 Newbury Road: This is the south part of a thatched range, 52 feet long, which may formerly have been a 4-bay unit with two 11 feet long flanking bays, and two 15 feet long bays comprising the hall. Truss II has the signs of a partition truss, truss III of an open truss. The collars are attached to the blades by mortice and tenon joints: there are no windbraces. Parts of the 9 in. $\times$ 6 in. purlin survive on the E. side of the house.

(*e*) Briar Cottages, Catte Street: This row of cottages is at present undergoing reconstruction. One cruck truss has been largely removed but another remains intact.

Frilsham Common, Magpie Farm: Isolated site (cf. White Cottage, Beenham). Blades of all four trusses survive. Hall has passage in Bay A adjacent to truss II: non-axial fireplace inserted *c.* A.D. 1600. Bay C (only 11½ ft. long) probably floored originally.

Harwell:

(*a*) Le Carillon, Church Lane: Opposite to Dell Cottage[20] but gable to lane. Assuming a 4-bay unit, as in FIG. 24, the surviving trusses are II (now gable truss) and IV, at the ends of a 2 bay, 24 foot long hall (Bays B & B′). In truss II (shown in LATE XIII of note 20(a)) the lower cross-member, *c.* 6 feet from the ground, is halved to one blade, and has mortice and tenon joint to the other blade. No assembly marks. Purlins in trenches. Windbraces. NMR photographs, by RCHM, 1968.

(*b*) Lockton House Farm: An outbuilding adjacent to the house and only some 20 yards from Dell Cottage and Le Carillon. The two cruck trusses to have survived appear to have enclosed the central bay, B: the western truss is smoke-blackened, and was a partition; the assembly mark appears on the Soffit of its S. blade which is

13 in. × 5½ in. and of elm. Well-cambered collar. Trenches for purlins. No windbraces. NMR photographs, by RCHM, 1968.

(*c*) Holywell Cottage, Wellshead Lane: Of small dimensions and parallel to the lane. Substantial remains of three trusses survive. Half-hipped at the west end. Purlins trenched in gable truss but rest on backs of blades in next (open) truss. Windbraces and assembly marks absent. Smoke-blackening present. Blades made from divided balks with their butt ends at the base. Documentary information in the Magdalen Deeds of Harwell[17] refer to messuages in le Wellshead from *c.* 1280 to 1350. NMR photographs by RCHM, 1968.

(*d*) H. S. Baker's, Wellshead Lane: Some 40 feet from (c), also parallel to the lane but lying 50 feet back from it. Only the end truss (I) survives. Crossbeam halved to blades. *Two* sets of windbraces. NMR, photographs, by RCHM, 1968.

(*e*) School House, Jennings Lane: A prominent cruck truss occurs in the gable (perpendicular to the lane) and parts of the next truss survive. A 3 bay, post and truss, range of *c.* 1590 with fireplace and characteristic chimney now abuts onto one side of the cruck unit. Internal evidence suggests that this post and truss range was, however, preceded by a shorter one of perhaps mid-16th date.

(*f*) Pomander Cottage, Townsend: Like Middle Farm, this belonged to Magdalen College. The cruck truss in the S. gable of this house was moved to its present position as part of a reconstruction by Mr. W. J. Bosley, the then owner, about 1925. Inside is an open cruck truss with a moulded soffit to the arch. NMR photographs, by RCHM, 1968.

(*g*) Drewett's Shop, High Street: A photograph, taken by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments a few years before the demolition of this building in 1963, shows a cruck blade at the S. end. The building was of particular interest for having, in addition, a two-floored one room unit, complete with its own roof, under a later roof.

Hinton Waldrist, The Rectory: On the west side of the Jacobean and Georgian ranges of this rectory is part of the medieval parsonage house, described in a survey of 1591 as a ' verie faire house ' and now consisting of a hall, partly floored and encased in stone. The hall apparently had 3 bays as there are *two* open trusses: the multi-pegged arch-braces and the parts of the cruck blades which form the arch of these trusses are chamfered and moulded. There are two sets of purlins, one below, one above the collar with windbraces to each set. The splayed joints on the purlins are Type 1 (FIG. 21). The shape of the open trusses resembles that in ' arch-braced ' halls. Probably slightly earlier than Northend Farm, Long Crendon, i.e. late 14th century. Photograph of exterior by P. S. Spokes, 1952, in NMR.

Milton, The Mill: This mill is one of several on the Ginge: apart from the milling of corn, it may have participated in the finishing operations for the local cloth trade of the 14th to 16th centuries. There are parts of one cruck truss, resting on a plinth.

Peasemore, The Cottage: There is one complete cruck truss, probably of 15th century date, of the breadth of the present house.

Steventon, 83-85 The Causeway: Much survives internally of the four cruck trusses and three bays now faced with brick. Truss I is identified by medieval scribe marks: Bay C has original flooring.

Steventon, 39 The Causeway: The sequential relationship of this cruck unit, which lies perpendicular to the 3 bay medieval range[23] (itself not later than *c.* 1400) is in doubt. It is my view that the two cruck trusses, which are built from narrow timbers, are substantially later than the 14th century range. NMR, photographs by P. S. Spokes, 1962.

Woodeaton, Cottage E. Side of Green (Note by W. A. Pantin): When demolished about 1960 this was a 3 cell stone-walled cottage with one surviving (internal) cruck truss. This truss, an open one, had a cranked collar-beam supported by chamfered arch-braces. There had evidently been windbraces and the purlins had been carried in trenches on the blades. This truss seems likely to have been in the centre of a 2-bay hall 24 feet in length, there being a longer bay of 14 feet and a shorter one, on the entrance side of 10 feet. When the hall was floored, an axial fireplace and chimney was inserted into this shorter of the two hall bays. The cruck house was probably timber-framed originally (later clad in stone) and had four rather than three bays.

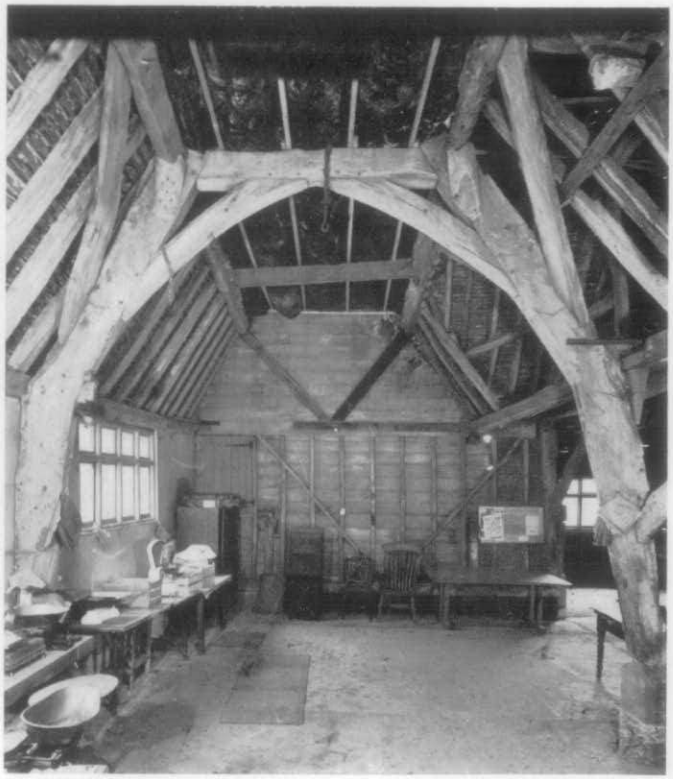
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to those who have kindly informed me about cruck buildings in the region: particularly to Mr. F. M. Underhill and Mr. C. B. Willcocks for sending me details and photographs; to Mr. C. J. Side and Mr. V. L. England for correcting my ignorance about crucks in E. Hendred; to Mr. Guy Beresford for information about Long Crendon; to Miss J. S. Howse for telling me about The Rectory, Hinton Waldrist; and to Mr. Emil Godfrey for telling me about the Shippon barn. My thanks go to the many owners and occupiers who have permitted me and my friends to enter their houses and make observations and measurements. I acknowledge the loan of photographs from the National Monuments Record for PLATE VIII.

[23] Rigold, *Trans. Newbury District Field Club*, x (1958), 4.

A

B



C

MIDDLE FARM, HARWELL.
A, B. Cruck Barn. A, Exterior; B, North part of Truss III.
C. Cruck Out-house, Open Truss.

Photos: The National Monuments Record